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**Government of the District of Columbia**



**Metropolitan Police Department**

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Testimony of  
**Metropolitan Police Department**

***“Joint Public Roundtable on School Safety  
and Security”***

**Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation  
The Honorable Kathy Patterson, Chair**

**Committee on the Judiciary  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chair**

**Council of the District of Columbia**

**May 23, 2005**

Council Chamber  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

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Chairpersons Patterson and Mendelson, members of the Committees and the Council, staff and guests – thank you for holding this Joint Public Roundtable on School Safety and Security. And thank you for the opportunity to present this opening statement. For the benefit of the audience watching on Channel 13 and others, my testimony is posted on the Police Department's website: [www.mpd.cdc.gov](http://www.mpd.cdc.gov).

First let me introduce myself and my colleagues at the table. My name is Margaret Poethig, and I am the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer in the Metropolitan Police Department. I led the school safety planning efforts and the security guard contract procurement process for the Department during the past year under the leadership and direction of Mayor Williams, City Administrator Bobb, Deputy Mayor Reiskin and Chief Ramsey. With me today are Assistant Chief Gerald Wilson and Cheryl Mitchell. Chief Wilson was recently sworn in to head up MPD's new Office of Security Services, which includes the School Safety Division. Cheryl Mitchell is the MPD's Director of Administration. She was involved in the security guard contract procurement process and will be overseeing technical monitoring of the contract. These two senior members will be sharing the responsibility of delivering high quality safety and security services to the District of Columbia Public Schools.

The School Safety and Security Contracting Procedures Act of 2004, which went into effect in April of 2005, transfers the responsibility for the school safety function and oversight of the school security guard contract to the MPD on July 1, 2005, pending approval by the Council of a comprehensive implementation plan. Today's roundtable provides an opportunity for the MPD to answer your questions about the proposed contract and the implementation plan.

Let me begin by describing how MPD is organized to manage this new function. As required by the School Safety Act, the MPD established a School Safety Division, headed by an Assistant Chief who reports directly to the Chief of Police. This Division is being staffed with a captain, three lieutenants, and a sergeant, who will provide strategic support and functional oversight of the school safety program and security services. Also based at police headquarters is the contract administration function within the Office of Corporate Support. Staffed by the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative and a small team of contract monitors, this unit will process requests for contract guard services from DCPS, review invoices, investigate deficiency notices, and conduct quality assurance checks in the field. They will work closely with the contractor and the School Safety Division to ensure that the technical requirements and standards of the contract are being met.

The direct services at DCPS locations will be carried out by 99 School Resource Officers, 14 SRO Sergeants, and contract guards. Based on a risk analysis the MPD conducted in 2004, SROs have been assigned to middle, junior, and senior high schools throughout the District. All of these schools have at least one SRO; those deemed to be at the highest risk have several officers. School Resource Officers and their sergeants provide a uniformed police presence during school hours and after-school events and will have an important role in monitoring the day-to-day activities and performance of contract personnel. They will also be responsible, under the direction of the School Safety Division, for implementing a school safety program at the school to which they are assigned in coordination with the principal.

From the tragic shooting death of James Richardson inside Ballou Senior High School 15 months ago to any number of other incidents of school violence, we know that crime problems in our neighborhoods often end up in our schools – and vice versa. The MPD is working hard to prevent this spill-over of crime between schools and neighborhoods by fully integrating school safety into our broader strategy of community policing, "Policing for Prevention." For that reason the Regional Operations Commands and Police Districts also have a central role in the school safety program.

School Resource Officers and sergeants are detailed from the School Safety Division to the police districts where the schools are located. This places them in the same chain of command as neighborhood patrol officers, and provides them with access to the same information and resources about crime in the community. Working with the Police Service Area lieutenants and PSA sergeants, the SRO sergeants will ensure that patrol officers working in the vicinity of the school pay attention to the area around the school and share

information and coordinate efforts with the SROs assigned to the schools. School safety issues will be among the various neighborhood crime problems that become the focus of PSA Plans. And anytime a principal has an issue about a neighborhood crime or disorder problem that impacts the safety of students and staff, he or she is encouraged to contact the Commander of the Police District where the school is located. Regional Assistant Chiefs, District Commanders and PSA lieutenants are all encouraged to develop relationships with the schools in their areas of command.

We believe the three-pronged structure that we have established—involving the Police Districts, the centralized School Safety Division, and the Office of Corporate Support, working in concert with DCPS and individual schools and school communities—will result in the most thorough and dynamic school safety and security program possible.

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A key component of the school safety and security program is the proposed new school security contract. This contract sets higher standards for the selection and training of school security personnel, and it establishes integrity and performance standards for personnel. This contract is the result of a cooperative effort among the MPD, DCPS, and the DC Office of Contracting and Procurement. As established by the Memorandum of Agreement for Awarding and Execution of the School Security Contract—which you will find in Appendix M of the implementation plan—the three agencies worked together to develop a comprehensive RFP and to complete a thorough evaluation of the offerors who responded. The technical evaluation panel consisted of six professionals whose range of experience and combined knowledge brought an expert perspective to the task of evaluating the security company proposals. The school security guard contract presented to you is the result of a fair, professional, and accountable process, transparent to all parties of the MOA.

The contract is based on a scope of work developed by a working group consisting of representatives from the three agencies. The foundation of the scope of work was a draft RFP provided by DCPS in August 2004. The key requirements in that draft RFP that have the greatest impact on the cost of the contract were the number of hours of personnel services and the types of positions. The proposed contract contains nearly the same number of hours as in the original contract with the current contractor, minus approximately 60,000 hours that were removed at the request of DCPS in October 2004. These hours corresponded to the investigators and the facilities security officers, functions which DCPS sought to retain and bring in-house. All other positions in the contract remained. The other major similarity to the current contract is the two-year base period, with three option years.

While the hours of service and the positions remained basically the same, the proposed contract contains numerous requirements related to the School Safety Act and the Child and Youth Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2005. For example, all security personnel must have 40 hours of training related to the specific demands of working in a school environment, including such topics as child development and behavior management, substance abuse and its effect on youth, Constitutional standards for searches and seizures conducted on school grounds, and Board of Education regulations. This is on top of 47 hours of basic security training and 16 hours of training for supervisors, which are standard provisions in the D.C. Office of Property Management contracts for citywide security services. Pursuant to the Child Safety Act, the school security guard contract also specifies pre-employment and random drug testing requirements and more stringent criminal background check requirements than those required for standard Security Officer and Special Police Officer licenses. These are important reforms that we believe will enhance the quality and performance of the contract security personnel working in our schools.

The RFP was also shaped with strong input from the community. In addition to addressing the concerns expressed by the Council, the Office of the Inspector General, and community stakeholders at a joint oversight hearing in March 2004, the RFP was influenced by the comments of a community advisory panel convened during the procurement process. This panel, consisting of two parents and a principal, expressed a

desire for the contract to ensure the following: (1) higher quality of training for the guards, (2) the ability of the contractor to attract a more mature guard force, (3) more “say” in the guards assigned to work on the contract, (4) expansion of the duties of the guards, and (5) a uniform that looks more “official.” I believe this contract satisfactorily addresses all of these community concerns.

To address the quality of training issue, the MPD requires the contractor to administer a test of basic security skills (proctored by the MPD), and to retrain all personnel who do not pass the test. Any guard who does not pass the test the second time will not be allowed to continue working on the contract. The ability of the contractor to attract a more mature guard force was addressed in the evaluation factors of the RFP, which assigned 25 out of 100 points to the Quality and Retention of Personnel. The selected vendor scored very high in this evaluation category. Furthermore, the vendor is proposing to pay the guards approximately \$1 more an hour, a measure that will go a long way toward attracting and retaining a more professional and mature guard force. To address concerns expressed by the panel that poorly performing guards were shuffled from one school to another, this contract contains a provision that at any time, the MPD may, in its sole discretion, require the contractor to immediately remove any employee from the contract. In addition, the liquidated damages clause specifies that the contractor shall pay the District \$1,000 for each employee that is determined to be prohibited from working on the contract under the Child Safety Act.

The contract requirements regarding the duties of security personnel also provide the MPD with a great deal of latitude. The contract states that the contractor is to follow the security policies and procedures provided by the MPD (and which are formulated in partnership with DCPS). Finally, as a result of the consultation with the community advisory panel, we changed the uniform requirement from the “soft look” of coat and tie to the “hard look” of a traditional security uniform with patches and a badge. The advisory panel felt that the hard-look uniforms were more professional looking and that the guards would feel better and do a better job if the uniforms looked more professional.

The devil is in the details, as they say, so I would also like to tell you about some of the minor modifications that—working together—should produce a substantial impact on the level of services under this contract. For example, the RFP provided greater specificity regarding the locations and hours to be covered by security personnel, including estimates of schedules and locations of special events. This will enable more efficient scheduling of security guards, including the use of part-time personnel, which should result in a reduction of overtime and thus more service hours available within the scope of the contract. The RFP also specifies 12 hours of daily security coverage at Senior High Schools, instead of 8 hours of coverage currently provided, because of extensive after-school activities and meetings that take place at these school sites. (The hours to cover this requirement came from a reduction in the number of hours designated for facilities security officers, a recommendation made by the DCPS Security Director.) We also increased slightly the number of on-site supervisory guards in order to provide higher quality services at all Senior High Schools and high-risk Junior High and Middle Schools.

These contract provisions and others are all critically important changes that have a relatively minor impact on cost, but that we expect will have a tremendous impact on DCPS and community satisfaction with the quality of security services and the sense of safety in our schools.

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The MPD’s oversight of the contract guards will be conducted in close coordination with the principal of each school. The School Safety Program described in the Comprehensive Implementation Plan recognizes that the principal is in charge of his or her school building, and the school security and safety activities that take place in the building and on the campus must align with the principal’s vision, knowledge, and authority. The only exceptions would be circumstances that involve a crime or other police matter or when the principal’s wishes somehow conflict with the school security guard contract and the citywide school security policies and procedures that are developed collaboratively by the MPD and DCPS. It is expected that principals will meet with designated MPD and contractual personnel on a regular basis to develop and evaluate school safety

plans, discuss safety policies and concerns, and provide input into the security team's Post Orders. With the principal's "prescribing authority," the principal can direct school security officers to perform their duties at locations he or she designates, provided such assignment is within the scope of the security guard contract and does not negatively impact entrance security and screening. The principal will be accountable for the direction given. This and other operational policies are described in detail in the Comprehensive Implementation Plan, the Concept of Operations for School Security found in Appendix D of the Plan, and in the MOA on School Safety Operations.

These documents were based on information collected and documented by a team of MPD members and consultants beginning in the spring of 2004. They address the concerns raised in D.C. Council hearings, community meetings, and D.C. Inspector General audits about the state of school security in the District of Columbia. The ideas in this plan have been discussed and negotiated both internally and with DCPS representatives at the Chief's School Security Steering Committee meetings and at numerous interagency working groups, which were established to handle specific transfer issues.

Throughout the year, MPD members met with stakeholder groups including the Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals, and Educators (SHAPPE), Parents United, the Board of Senior High Principals, and the Regional Operations Command Youth Advisory Councils. A small committee of stakeholders was given an opportunity to review, provide comment on, and help finalize the contents of the Concept of Operations for D.C. School Security. The MPD has also consulted with the Superintendent of Schools and his designees, along with members of the DCPS Security Division, on the various issues that arose in the development of this plan. Finally, the City Administrator, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, members of the Mayor's policy staff, and members of the Office of the Chief Financial Officer have lent their support, where needed, throughout this planning process.

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We believe this plan and this contract will result in a better-trained, higher-quality school safety workforce; greater coordination among private security, MPD personnel, and school staff; and, ultimately, safer schools for our students, faculty, staff and parents. Of course, with MPD's new responsibility also come the expectation and the opportunity for the police and the schools to work more closely on a range of issues that impact the safety of our young people, in the schools and in the community. The MPD stands ready to meet those expectations and take advantage of those opportunities.

But the fact remains that school safety is a complex issue that demands thoughtful, careful and comprehensive solutions. School safety involves much more than guards and metal detectors at the door and cameras in the hallways. Creating a safe and positive school environment – one that is free of drugs, violence, intimidation and fear – encompasses a wide range of physical, social and academic factors that involve a number of different agencies and individuals. Coordinating these myriad activities – and getting everyone working together – is essential to our success. The Metropolitan Police Department is committed to this goal, and we stand ready to continue working with DCPS, other agencies, and the community to help make our schools safer.

Thank you.